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A GUIDE

TO

NAGARJUNA-KONDA

BY

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A GUIDE TO NAGARJUNA KONDA*

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NAGARJUNA KONDA (the Hill of Nāgārjuna), properly so-called, is only the northern part of a ring of table-topped hills. The valley, encompassed by this ring, is about eight to ten square miles. It is about 14 to 15 miles North of Macherla, the terminus of a branch-line from Guntur to Macherla. In the middle of this valley rises the hill of Mallikhārjuna or Mallayy-guṭṭa, for about 500 feet high. This valley is divided into two parts by the river Kṛishṇā, which is also the dividing line between the State of Āndhrā and that of Hyderabad.[2] With the high hill of Mallayya-guṭṭa and the river Kṛishṇā, this ring undoubtedly presents one of the most picturesque localities in the whole of South India.

No wonder, therefore that this locality was known in ancient times as *Śrī-Parvata*, the "Hill of Splendour." At present there are only three or four small villages in this valley, and hence it presents a deserted appearance, but there are vestiges all over of a glorious past. For here once stood the city, called in the early inscriptions '*Vijayapura*' or "*Vijayapuri*" which was in all probability the capital of the *Ikshvāku* emperors. It must have been an important city in the early centuries of the Christian era, during the days of other emperors also.

The credit of discovering this site belongs to an Indian, one Mr. A. Rangaswami Saraswati of the Epigraphical Branch at Madras. He found some Stūpas and some Āyāka-stambhas or marble pillars, "at the entrances of the Stūpas), bearing Brahmi inscriptions, in 1926. The site was excavated by Messrs. Longhurst, T. N. Ramachandran,

*This *guide* was handed over to Archaeological Dept. Govt. of India, for publication in 1954. Because of the Departmental delay and the new materials it will not be published by them any more. Hence it is being published in this form.

(1) It is this valley, that will serve as one of the reservoirs of water, when the Nandikonda dam project is completed. The general ground level of the valley is between 350 to 400 feet above the sea-level. After the completion of the dam which would be 590 ft. above the sea level, the water will rise in this valley to a height of above 590 feet, above the sea level.

(2) Now united under the name of Andhra Pradesa.

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and others. In view of the proposal of erecting a high dam at Nandikonda, fresh excavations are being conducted by Dr. R. Subrahmanyam and his assistants for a few years next.

So far, the excavationists have hardly touched any real habitation site of ancient times in this valley. The latter have concerned themselves only with the spiritual vestiges of the city of Vijayapuri, that one meets in the monastic establishments. It was almost a tenet with the Buddhists that such establishments should be removed from the din and hubbub of the city. It was far from the maddening crowd's ignoble strife' that one could have the peace of mind for study and meditation' It is further curious to observe that these establishments are often found in this valley and in other localities in South India and Kashmir, often on the top or slope of some hillock or natural eminence.

Thus, there are eight or more monastic units on the slope of or around the Maha-dhamma-giri, three, if not more, on the top of Chulla-dhamma-giri, and two on the Chamdaka-pavata. Each monastic unit consisted of three components, viz. a Vihara, a Chaitya-griha and a stūpa The first of these consisted of two parts, (1) an Āvasatha or monastic rooms, and (2) a Mandapa. In this valley, the mandapa was often of stone, though instances of brick- built ones are not lacking The Mandapa is encircled mostly on three sides, but occasionally also on the fourth, by a set of rooms, which together comprise the Āvasatha. It would be clear that the Āvasatha was the place of residence of the monks, while the Mandapa was the place of public recitations or lectures, delivered by Ācharyas.

There appears to be little doubt in the building of these monastic units. The monks were guided by certain rules or regulations. Thus, the vihāra proper was invariably situated in one of the cardinal directions of the stūpa. Further, proceeding from the Stūpa towards the Vihāra one came across the Chaitya-griha on one's right. Again, the Āchārya, delivering his sermons on Dhamma from his central position in the back of the Mandapa, could easily see the central Āgāka pillar of ihe Stūpa, through the entrance.

The Stūpa itself was the object of worship, representing the death of the Buddha, or rather the Buddha in his death. It was a place of public prayers or public worship, just as the Mandapa wa the place, of public study or a public lecture hall. On the other hand, the "Chaitya-griha" was a place of both private worship and private study; for here, the monks could concentrate on the recitation of Mantras or

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on the study of their religious texts. Stūpa is a well-known structure, easily recognizable by its original hemispherical shape. Chaitya is the same thing as a Stūpa. It will thus be clear that a "Chaitya-gṛiha" is *gṛiha* or *mandira*, a temple, containing a "Chaitya" or a "Stūpa". It is an elongated structure, apsidal or semi-circular at one end. There is evidence to show that it was covered by an arched roofing and ceiling.

The great number of these monastic establishments betrays the existence of a prosperous and continuous settlement in the neighbourhood. That settlement, *Vijayapuri*, could not have been the capital of the Ikshvākus, ordinarily speaking, if it had no special features to attract it. The ring of hills around and the citadel of Mallayya-guṭṭa were undoubtedly features, that, on account of the great safety they afforded, must be included among such. Such a place could indeed have a long and continuous history, as indeed a study of this locality and of all the inscriptions in this place and the neighbourhood would show. All the same, this history is often nebulous, conjectural, or at best legendary.

It is widely believed among scholars that Mahādēva, a missionary sent by the Mauryan emperor Aśoka to regions near Mysore, was responsible for bringing the ashes of the Buddha to this valley. This belief is not an improbability. It is also believed that these ashes were enshrined in a Stūpa, that is to be identified with the one, mentioned in local inscriptions as the "*Maha-Chaitya*." This is, however, quite problematical. There is no doubt that this Mahachaitya enshrined in its "womb" the ashes (or Dhātu) of the Buddha, i. e. it was a Dhātu-garbha or Dāgobā. But both architectural and epigraphical considerations make it certain that not only a majority of the Āyāka-stambhas (Entrance-pillars) of this Mahā-chaitya, but indeed the Mahā-chaitya itself was built primarily by Mahātalavari Kshānti śrī, in the 6th regnal year of her nephew and son-in-law Mahārāja Śrī-Virapurusha-datta. It is said to have been constructed after the Mahā-vihāra had itself come into existence. And it is quite in keeping with the things, that first of all residential quarters for the monks should have been built, and then the Stūpa should have been erected, for them to worship.

From the inscriptions *in situ*, we indeed get the whole chronology of the construction of the various parts of the *Mahāvihāra*. From this it would appear that the Āvasatha, the Mahā-chaitya, the Maṇḍapa, and the Chaitya-griha were built in this order. This Mahā-chaitya is the biggest of all in this valley, and measures about 92 feet in diameter and about 289 feet in circumference. It is also the only one that is defi-

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nitely known to have been "blessed by the best of the ashes" (Dhātu-vara-parigahita) viz. those of the Buddha himself. This Mahā-chaitya, together with the adjacent Mahā-vihāra and the Chaitya-griha were built for the sake of the Apara-mahāvina-seliyas. This fact alone is sufficient to show that all these were constructed in times not far removed from each other's

En passent, we may learn something about the connections of the donoress *Chāmtisiri (Kshānti-s'ri)*. She proudly calls herself a a full sister of the emperor Chāmta-mula (Kahānta–mūla), who had performed a number of Brahmanical sacrifices, including As'vamedha, Agnishṭoma, Vājapeya, etc. This would show that although the male members of the Ikshvāku line followed the Brahmanical faith, the female members were free enough and intellectually intelligent enough to follow a different faith. Indeed, in this the Ikshvākus merely follow the tradition set up by their predecessors, the Sātavāhanas. This was no doubt made possible by the religious freedom that everybody enjoyed as well as by the fact that the Mahāyāna or Mahāsāṁghika Buddhism was in reality a compromise with Hinduism. If *Nāgārjuna*, the most eminent philosopher of this school, started this idea here in about the first century A.D., it was with the object of popularising the creed This idea is witnessed in a number of Brahmanical concepts, symbols, and even divinities being assimilated in the Buddhist religion and Iconography. Kshāntamūla is further described as a devotee of Virūpāksha-pati Mahāsena, i. e. S'iva, the lord of the host of Virūpākshas. This S'iva is no doubt the far-famed *Mallikārjuna* of S'rī-Parvata. Kshāntis'ri is described in her inscriptions also as the wife of Skanda–s'rī of the family of the Pūkiyas, who was a Mahaṣenapati (Great General) and a Mahatalavara. It is also stated in her inscriptions that she had given her daughter to her brother's son, S'rī-Virapurusha-datta, the reigning emperor.

Towards the north-east of this Maha-vihara, there is a hillock that was called in ancient times *'Chulla-Dhamma-giri'*, the Smaller Hill of Piety-and is now known by the more prosaic name of Nallarālabodu (the Hill of Black Stones). Here, in ancient times, there were at least three monastic establishments, the most important of which was the *Simhalā Vihārā*, a monastery built specially for the Ceylonese monks, who had come all the way here to study the tenets of Buddhism. Now at that site we find a small *vihārā*, in which the Maṇḍapa contains not a vestige of a lithic pillar. It is therefore easy to conclude that this *vihārā* had no stone collonade or S'aila-Maṇḍapa, but only one of wooden pillars.

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The Chaitya-gṛiha connected with this Simhala-vihara contains a very important inscription on the floor. That inscription states that the donor of that Chaitya-gṛha, a lady by name Bodhisiri (Bodhiśrī), had constructed a temple of the Bodhi Tree within the Simhala-vihāra itself. This temple is identifiable with a room in the South-eastern corner, which has got a decorated platform within it, undoubtedly the platform of the Bodhi tree. It is clear that the Ceylonese monks, who were used in their country to worshipping the Bodhi tree, were provided with a branch of the Bodhi tree here also, to enable them to worship it.

But what is more interesting is the fact that the Ceylonese monks no more looked to Kalinga (portions of Orissa) for their guidance or their texts, as they did in the days of Asoka, etc. but they found here almost half way an important centre of Buddhism, where they could easily get their teachers and texts.

The inscription of Bodhiśrī in the Chaitya-gṛiha further informs us that in this monastery a number of monks from the following countries had come, in order to learn their lessons, viz., China (China), Chilata (Kirata-Tibet), Kasmira (Kashmir), Gandhara (Taxila-Peshawar region), Vaṅga (portion of Bengal), Tosali (Kalinga), Aparaṇta (western coast roughly from Narmada to Goa), Vanavāsa (western coast south of Goa), Damila (Tamila-nāḍu), besides some other provinces. It is clear from this that this region had become much more important than Kalinga; for monks from that province also came up here.

Like a number of other *vihāras* in Śrī-Parvata valley, this Siṁhala-vihara also was built during the prosperous regime of Śrī-Virapurusha-datta. This prosperity of his reign was not due to a single regime. His reign was preceded by those of Rudrapurushadatta and Kshantamūla, the earliest known rulers of the Ikshvaku dynasty, and the thirty emperors of the Satavahana dynasty. Nagarjuna himself was a contemporary, not of any of the Ikshvaku rulers, but of an early Satavahana king, by name Hala. This would bring out the fact that the growth of Buddhism and of the monasteries in this valley was not a sudden growth, but that it took numerous decades. At the time when Nagarjuna preached, there must have been only one sect of the Mahāsaṁghika school here. But about the time of Śrī Virapurushadatta and Bahuvala Kahanta-mūla, we find Apara-śailiya, Bahu-śrutiya, Mahiṁśāsaka and other sects of that school, in this valley. This also proves the same thing, that at least a few decades must have intervened between the days of Nāgārjuna and the days of Śrī-Virapurushadatta.

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Proceeding towards the eastern end of the valley, we come to what is popularly called the *"University Area."* Here, we have a couple of Vihāras adjoining each other, and each of them is a more complicated structure than the early *Vihārās*, like the ones, studied by us so far. It is because of this that this whole area is taken to be a conglomerate, worthy to be called a "University." Each *Vihārā* is at best a "College," if such modern terminology is to be applied, the Simhala-vihāra being a "Foreignors' College" And the whole of the Śrī-Parvata valley should be termed a "University" after the name, say, of Nāgārjuna.

One of the Stūpas in this area, the one on the Southern side was a highly decorated structure. Carvings on it included many representations of the life of the Buddha and of the Jātaka tales, that narrate the events of the former lives of the Buddha. Such representations were to be found on the beams at the entrance as well as on the vertical slabs, fixed to the dome (aṇḍa) of the Stūpa. There were also miniature representations of this and allied classes of *stūpās*, carved on other vertical slabs. These are now known as Stūpa-slabs, and are mentioned in ancient records as "Chaitya-patas." All these slabes have been removed to the Museum, where we can study them along with others, of similar types, from other Stupas.

Here too some "Dhātu" (ashes), kept in golden casket, itself preserved in a silver one, were found. Probably they belong to some important Āchārya. In the monastery attached to this Stūpa there exists a well-formed drain, which the modern archaeologists have often called a "Urinal." It is, however, extremely doubtful, if the Buddhist monks ever used this drain as a urinal, which is not more than sixteen feet removed from the Maṇḍapa or the preaching hall. We must remember that this hall was entirely open on all sides and that monks and nuns of all categories, including those of the royal family, gathered in it to listen to the sermon on "Dhamma", preached by the venerable Āchāryas.

In the adjoining Vihāra, there are certain interesting circular structures in a courtyard, four in number, and square inside. One may conjecture these to be the temples of some Buddhist symbols like the Dharma-chakra, Bodhi-maṇḍa, Agni-skandha, Bodhi Tree etc. In this Vihāra there is a Sanskrit inscription, of about the fourth cent. A. D. which contains its description as *'Vihāra-mukhya Vigata-jvarālaya'* a phrase, which is rather difficult to interpret. Possibly "Vigata-jvarālaya" signifies no more than "Jinālaya" or a Buddhist shrine. A Vihāra or a Saṁghārāma is indeed a sacred place, for Saṁgha itself is

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one of the three *ratnas* of the Buddhist faith. Another thing, that attracts our attention is that in the place, where we usually have a Chaitya-griha in other monastic units, i. e., on the right hand side while proceeding from the Stūpa to the Vihāra proper, we find here a Buddha-gṛiha instead; and this Buddha-gṛiha, unlike the Chaitya-gṛihas and the Buddha-gṛihas elsewhere in this valley, is square. Many of these features of this monastic unit make it apparently clear that this is one of the latest Vihāras to be seen here.

In the north-eastern corner of this valley, there is another monastic unit, now shrouded or surrounded by a thicket. Here was built perhaps the *most decorated Stūpa* in the whole valley. A number of beautiful carvings, found on Dachepalle limestone, that are now in the Museum, hail from this locality. Like the Stūpa in the so-called "University site", this Stūpa also possessed decorated beams or transoms at the entrances, and the whole Stūpa appears to have been covered to a great height by vertical slabs of two types, viz. the Chaitya patas or Stupa-slabs, containing miniature representations of the Class that they adorned, and the "Chitra-patas" or slabs containing the representations of the events of the life of the Buddha or of his past lives. From the classes of the Stupa-slabs found here as well as from other evidence, it is clear that here we had one of the latest varieties of Stupas to be found in the valley of Śrī Parvata.

Passing alongside the hill of Nāgārjuna on its South, about three furlongs to the North of the Mahāvihāra, one comes across a big monastery, containing a large size lithic Maṇḍapa. It is formed of a double set of six rows of decorated pillars, surrounded by residential quarters of the monks. One of these pillars contains an inscription, which speaks of this as the Vihāra of the Ācharyas of the Bahusutiya (Bahusuttiya in Prakrit and Pāli and Bahus'rutiya in Sanskrit) sect, of the Mahāsāṁghika or Mahāyāna school. The name of the "Dāyikā" (donoress) is given in this record as "Bhaṭi-deva" which in Sanskrit would be Bhaṭṭi-devī. She is described as the daughter-in-law of Kshāntamūla, the wife of Vira-purusha-datta, and the mother of "Bahuvula" Kshantamula. This "Bahuvula" is no doubt intended to represent "Bahuvala" found in other records. Whereas "Bahuvula" has no meaning, "Bahuvala" is evidently to be equated with "Bahu-bala" meaning a "man with great prowess." Two similar inscriptions, recording the gift of the same Vihāra by the same lady, are found on two Āyāka-stambhas of this Stūpa, which also is known to have yielded some relics.

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Continuing our sojourn towards the West alongside the southern flank of the hill of Nāgārjuna, we come to a hillock by the side of the river Kṛishṇā. On the top of this hillock, or along its slope we come across two Vihāras of moderate dimensions. One of these contained at the entrance of the Stupa a few carved beams or transoms. On one of these was found an inscription, which mentions this locality as "Chhadaka-pavata" or *Chandaka-parvata*. The "Dāyikā" of the beam is said to be one Saga, wife of a Bania by name Chana-paduma.

One of the Viharas in this locality was favoured by the Āchāryas of the *Mahisasaka* sect. The donoress of this Vihāra was Mahādēvi Koḍabali, who describes herself as the daughter of Vīrapurusha-datta, the sister of Bahuvala-Kshāntamūla and the wife of the Mahārāja of Vanavāsa, perhaps a king of the Pallava line. In this record the name of the brother of the donoress is mentioned twice and quite clearly as "Bahuvala" Kshāntamūla, and it is dated in his 11th year.

A little over half a mile to the South of this Chhandaka-parvata, there is a hill, now known as Pedda-Kundel-guṭṭa, but anciently called *Mahā-Dhamma-giri*. Among a number Vihāras, with which its slopes and vicinity appear to be studded, there is one, which has yielded to the excavators eight *Stupa-slabs* of Class II. Seven of these have enriched the collection in the Museum, while the eight is still *in situ*. This clearly proves that the main Stūpa itself at this site (Site No. XI of the archaeologists) belonged to this variety. Taking a comparative view, on the whole it would appear that the Stūpas in the Vihāras nearer the city of Vijayapuri belonged to an earlier date than those further away from it. And out of the decorated Stūpas, the later ones were the more decorated.

This enables a general classification of the decorated Stūpas found in this valley of S'ri-Parvata. Since the Stupas themselves have been destroyed now, it is the contemporary miniature representations thereof, found on the *Chaitya-patas or Stupa-slabs*, that allow us a glimpse into this classification, at the present date. These Chaitya-paṭas enable us to study the gradual development of the art that flowered in this valley during the time of the Sātavāhanas and the Ikshvākus. We have been able to divide the Stūpa-slabs of this locality into seven classes. Of these, the first four are to be found in both Amaravati and S'rī-Parvata valley; and they belong to the times of the Satavāhanas. On the other hand, the last three classes are peculiar to the valley of S'rī-Parvata, and in all probability belong to the time of the Ikshvākus. The main characteristic that distinguishes these two

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groups is that in the former the Buddha is represented symbolically and not in a human figure, below the Āyāka-paṭa; i. e. his statue was not worshipped in a "Budda-griha" in the vicinity of the facade; while in the latter a human figure is shown, i. e. some shrine containing such a figure must have been in the vicinity of its prototype.

The sculptures, that were found on or in the vicinity of the Stupas in the valley of Śrī-Parvata, which we studied so far, are kept in the Museum of Nāgārjuna-koṇḍa. Here we can study about half a dozen types of slabs or paṭas among these sculptures, viz. (1) The Stupa-slabs, (2) the frieze-slabs, (3) the Āyāka-paṭas, (4) the Jātaka-slabs, (5) the Life-story slabs, and (6) the Symbolic slabs. Besides these, there are the beams or transoms and the statues of the Buddha.

We have the *Stupa-slabs of Class II to Class VII* arranged with a view to enable one to see the development of decoration on the peculiar type of Āndhra *stupas*. This type differed from the general-one may say, all-India type in having four offsets in the four cardinal directions, each of them supporting five stone pillars. These offsets and the pillars added greatly to their beauty.

One can see that the decoration tends to become more and more profuse, and at a later stage even stylized. Many earlier features, testifying to the simplicity of taste, disappear, yielding place first to fondness of details, and later even to cumbrous exhuberance of intricate designs.

Thus in *Class II* of Stupa-slabs, we find the dome (anda) mostly plain and without frieze decoration of the style that we find in succeeding Classes. This Class has on the Āyāka-paṭa the figure of some animal, symbolising the Buddha or referring to some event of his life. Below this Āyāka-paṭa, we often come across a small shrine, containing some symbolic representation of the Buddha, in the form of Agni-skandha, or a Pūrṇa-kumbha, or a Dharma-chakra, etc. All these symbols were originally taken up by the Buddhist faith from the Brahmanical faith, and applied with reference to some event in the life of the Buddha. Thus Agni-skandha is actually styled after Śiva-linga, as identical with Agni-Rudra, a pillar, out of which flames (Yahvis) arose. A comparison of this with Jehoveh, who appeared as a "pillar of flames" would not be uninteresting, to bring out wide-spread nature of this cult. Pūrṇakumbha is the earlier Mangala-kalaśa, and Dharma-chakra the original Surya-chakra.

Above the Stupa, there is the representation of a flying Gandharva on either side, and below him a royal figure, standing. The latter

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is missing in subsequent varieties; and when we get in them a glimpse of this portion near the top of the dome (anda), we find more than one figure on either side.

In *Class III* and following classes, the Āyāka-paṭa mainly depicts the scene of the Buddha preaching to the 33 Gods, headed by Brahmā and S'akra. A majority of the actual Āyāka-paṭas in the Museum (Nos. 160, 161 and 162) depict the same scene, which was naturally regarded as the most important in the life of the Buddha. In the miniature representations on the Stupa-slabs, we often find Brahma and Sakra, accompanied by a few representatives of other Gods.

The most important characteristic of Class III is that the dome (aṇḍa) is decked with the friezes of symbols like Pūrṇa-kumbhas, Animals, Tri-ratnas, etc. These are placed immediately above the Vedikā. One of the slabs of this Class (No. 8) bears letters "Dhamasa" in characters that may be relegated at the latest to the first or second century A. D. This would support the dating here assigned to Classes II to IV, viz. the Sātavāhana period.

In *Class IV*, we find the frieze-symbols going high up on the dome (aṇḍa). Between them and the Vedikā, there intervene representations of the past lives of the Buddha (or Jātaka-kathās) and of the events of the life of the Buddha himself.

In *Class V*, we find the figure of the seated Buddha coming for the first time. Here it is represented in the beginning together with the older symbols, e. g. the Bodhi Tree, Nāgarāja Muchilinda, etc. Later on, these older symbols disappear.

In *Class VI*, we have the figure of the standing Buddha, first alone, then with Vajrapāṇi, and later on with Vajrapāṇi and a Court of seated devotees. Lastly, we find the standing Vijrapāṇi replaced by by two standing figures. It will be noticed that the Buddha is standing on a lotus (Padmāsana), and that he has his right arm and right shoulder bare, whereas his left arm (with the exception of his hand) and his left shoulder are covered by Saṁghāṭi. It is in this dress and fashion that we actually meet him in his bigger representations (of statues) at both Nāgārjuna-koṇḍa and Amarāvatī. Most of the figures of the Buddhas of the Stūpa-slabs of Class V and Class VI have haloes, that are quite plain, with out any "rays" whatsoever. But one of the latest varieties in Class VI, viz. No. 242, displays a halo, in which rays, like those of the Sun, are seen radiating from the centre. It is

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in this Stūpa-slab that standing Vajrapāṇi is replaced by two standing figures.

In *Class VII*, we come across, not the figure of the Buddha, but that of Bodhisattva, e. g. the prince Siddhārtha or a figure of a former birth of the Buddha. This would show that the Bodhisattva form had gained in importance by the time, this sort of Stūpa came into existence, foreshadowing the future worship of the Bodhisattvas in the period of decline of Buddhism. When this worship comes into being, the Buddha is automatically raised to still higher status. In one such example, the prince Siddhārtha is seated, while in another he is standing, wearing his ornaments quite prominently. In a third, we find Bodhisattva as Chakravartin Māndhātā, with his four (out of seven) *ratnas* or jewels. These four *ratnas*, Chakra, Hastin, Aśva, and Pariṇāyaka, symbolise his sovereignty over the four-fold army of ancient times-the *chaturanga-bala*. No. 58, depicting Brāhmaṇa Droṇa, holding the caskets of the ashes of the Buddha, also belongs to the same Class, in which the Buddha is substituted by something, that is either connected with him or symbolises him in some form.

Whether it is in the carving of such a prosaic subject as a Stūpa on these slabs, or it is in that of the emotional themes of the life of Gautama Buddha or of his past births, the artist of Śrī-Parvata was even at his worst no third-rate artisan, whose excellence lies in faithful imitation. Here we no doubt see him imitating his predecessors, but always with a view to improve, and hence always experimenting with newer and newer forms.

The miniature representations of the "friezes" on the *anda* may be compared with the actual big-size "*frieze-slabs*" in the Museum. One of the best instances of such "frieze-slabs" is to be found in No. 71 of the Museum. The friezes on this slab are, from top to bottom, those of the following :- (1) Mālā (Garland) and Mālā-vāhaka (Garland-bearer); (2) Pūrna-kumbhas; (3) Stūpas; (4) Tri-ratnas and (5) Quadrupeds, consisting mainly of the lions. It is clear that these five friezes symbolise five important events in the life of the Buddha. It is to be noted that the Mala surrounds in this and a numbes of other friezes a representation of the Bodhi Tree. It can be, therefore, easily taken to symbolise the event of Sambodhi or Enlightenment, that took place at Bodh Gaya under the "Bodhi Tree." The Pūrna-kumbha is found invariably in the scene of the birth of the Buddha, and in fact, represents in those scenes the child Siddhārtha Gautama. The Stūpa is a wellknown and probably the most worshipped of all the symbols of

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the Buddha. It represents, as is well-known, the death or Mahāparinirvāna of the Buddha, or rather, the Buddha in his death. The Tri-ratna symbol stands for the Buddha-ratna, Saṁgha-ratna and Dharma-ratna. The Buddha preached about these three jewels for the first time probably on the occasion of the first sermon. Hence, in such friezes, the Tri ratna symbol should be taken to signify the event of the First Sermon or Dharma-chakra-pravartana. The quadruped frieze contains mostly the figures of lions, with their own mouths or with birds' beaks. The lion here represents the Śākya-siṁha. It was as Śākya-siṁha that the Buddha-he had not become the "Buddha" at that time-set out on the mission of his life of finding out the Truth. The horse, Kanthaka, that he rode at that time may also be represented (as in this frieze) in lieu of the lion, to symbolize the same event of Mahābhinishkramana.

Instead of such five friezes on one and the same stone-slab, one often sees a lesser number of friezes, e. g. four, three, two or even one. The most popular one is found to have three; and in them those symbolizing the most important events like birth, death and first sermon are found to be popular representations. In view of these five symbols, representing five main events of the life of the Buddha, it is possible to conceive that even the five Āyāka-stambhas that adorned the projections at the cardinal points of the Stūpa also represent the same five events. In any case, when in earliar stages of the history of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Buddha was not being represented in a human form, he was being worshipped in some symbolic form. And the Āyāka-stambhas were also an object of worship, certainly not for themselves but for some aspects of the Buddha or events of his life, that they symbolised.

To the same category of symbolic representations belong those that have been mentioned above as the "*Symbolic slabs.*" In No. 235 of this type, we find Nāgarāja Muchilinda with five hoods, supporting a Chhatra above. This Snake-king protected the Buddha from a great sudden shower, when the Buddha was enjoying the "Vimutti-sukha" (corresponding to Brahmānanda of the Brahmanical faith) during the week following the event of Sambodhi or Enlightenment. The Chhatra above this Nāgarāja is only intended to show symbolically the presence of the Buddha, seated under him. In No. 33, we find a representation of the Bodhi Tree, with two regally-dressed persons standing on two sides of it, holding a jala-kumbha (or a pot filled water), in order to water it. The figures of these two princes may be reckoned among

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the most beautiful carvings to be seen in the Museum. One of them with an undamaged face bears a pleasant smile, and both are standing in an elegant manner. In two other examples of this category, No. 140 and 41, we have the scenes of Dharma-chakra-pravartana and Mahā-parinirvāna represented symbolically by an empty, *Svastika-stupa*-casket, respectively.

As noticed above, in the huge Āyāka-patas, Nos. 160, I61 and 162 the most important event of the life of the Buddha, viz. his First Sermon (Dharma-chakra-pravartana) to the very gods in the Tāvatimsa-bhavana, is shown. In this "bhavana", 33 gods dwelt; and one could count all these in the round panels, depicting this scene. These 33 gods are mentioned in the Aitareya Brāhmana and other early Brahmanical texts. It is these that multiplied, through 3300, then 33,000 later 33,00,000 to 33,00,00,000 gods, that we find in modern Hindu religion. We have texts for all these number. These 33 gods themselves have developed from the original Trinity of Brahmā, Vishnu, and Rudra-Siva, who are themselves originally one, only representing different aspects of the same god-head. Vishnu multiplied into 12 Ādityas, and Rudra-Siva into 11 Rudras, and in this way, one got the 33 gods. These gods, headed by Brahmā and Caxra (one of the two popular forms of Indra, found in Buddhist mythology), requested the Buddha to preach the same "Dhamma" to themselves, which he had already preached to men. The First Sermon to human beings was delivered before his five disciples at the "Deer Park' of Sarnath, mentioned in Pāli texts as "Isipatana Migadāya" (Rishipatana Mrigadāva). This sermon was naturally represented, because of the presence of the deer in the vicinity, with a couple of deer seated in front of the Buddha. In the Tāvatimsa-bhavana or heaven, there was no deer nor the "Deer Park." But since this was also the First Sermon in heaven, it is represented with deer, after the fashion of the First Sermon on the earth. The Buddha is seated here on a 'Diamond-throne' (Vajrāsana).

The only other Āyāka-pata (No. 159) represents the carrying away of the "Ushnisha" of prince Siddhārtha by the gods to the Tāvatimsa-bhavana. When the prince handed over all his other ornaments to his groom Chhanna, he threw his Ushnisha (turban or crown) up into *antariksha*, saying: "If my mission is to be fulfilled, this crown will not fall on the ground." The gods who were around him all through Mahābhiniskramana immediately picked it up and carried it dancing and merry-making, to the heaven. In this representation we find a number of *musical instruments*, stringed (tata) drum-like (ānaddha), and blowable (sushira). While men's fashion of dancing

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manifesting vigour and virility, is to be observed, here, women's is to be seen in No. 122, which is a pillar carved on all sides. In the latter you find the chief female dancer, accompanied by two others, entering the stage, and then performing the climax of the dance, and lastly, she is being rewarded by a golden bracelet by the emperor himself, while the drummer, who kept the beating during her dance, is seen with his drum behind her. Musical instruments are also shown elsewhere on this pillar and some beam-slabs etc. Thus in No. 17, we find that the ladies, who were to beguile the prince Siddhārtha with vocal and instrumental music, have gone to sleep over their own instruments. Elsewhere on the Stūpa-slabs also we occasionally come across representations of contemporary drums, etc.

The Buddha cannot be supposed to have attained his greatness in one life. Hence, he must have taken birth, not always of human beings, on a number of previous occasions; and on each such occasion, He must have performed some glorious deed, in the field of self-sacrifice, wisdom, etc. Indeed in all the tales that we get, who was better fitted than the Buddha to represent the man or the beast that acted wisely or with the best of motives, and in a sacrificing spirit? Thus out of the current folk-lore and the concept of rebirth (punarjanma) originated the *Jātaka-kathās*, a collection of tales in Pālī, that often betrays a striking resemblance with the A E.sop's Fables, which originated about the same time in Egypt. Both of them obviously owe their birth to wide and shrewd experiences of the merchants, that traded between these two countries and in all the intervening regions.

In the Museum, you find the Ghaṭa-jātaka, based on the story of the birth of Kṛishṇa while his mother Devaki was in the imprisonment of her brother Kaṁsa. (No. 51). In No. 199, we have Bodhisattva in the birth of a pious hare, that used to preach the merit of giving donations (dāna) on fasting days (Uposathas), to his animal friends, a monkey, an otter, and a jackal. Once all of them determined to observe the next day, as an Uposatha, by offering *dānas*. So, Śakra visited them all to put them to test, in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa. Then all these friends offered what they had stolen, the monkey a bunch of mango fruits, the otter a couple of fish, and the jackal a curd-pot (dadhivāraka). Only the hare, not having stolen anything and also having nothing else to offer, offered his own body, by jumping into fire, for the Brāhmaṇa to eat his roasted flesh. But this fire could not burn even a single hair on his body, for which the Bodhisattva blamed the Brāhmana. The latter, revealing his identity, consoled him by telling that he would put his figure on the moon and thus

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immortalize him. Hence it is that the moon is known as S'as'ānka. In 180, we find the Bodhisattva as prince Vessamtara, who, because of his "inordinate munificence," was expelled by his subjects to the forest. Even there, a Brāhmana pursued him and begged of him his sole possessions, viz. his kids, Jāli and Kanhājina. After giving the gift, he is seen here also in the form of a seated *muni*. He wanted to parry off the questening of his wife, who had afterwards returned from the forest, above her kids, this, for the reason that she might not die broken-hearted by the sudden shock. So he assumed this *mauna-vrata*, when, it was agreed previously between the two, he was not to be disturbed on any account. The next day he tells her of his gift. The Brāhmana, carrying the Kids missed his way into the kingdom of that prince's father, and the kids were immidiately recognized, this leading ultimately to the subjects being reconciled, the prince being found out, and all ending well. In Nos. 42 and 141, we have an eternal theme, of a step-mother falling in love with her step-son, and when the latter was not minded to requite that love, of his being accused as having molested her. This story from Mahā-padma-jātaka, in which Bodisattva in the birth of Mahāpadma is hurled down a precipice, is comparable to similar stories in Egyptian inscriptions, Grecian legends, Kunāla's tale, the story of ās'rñgadhara' etc In 32, we find Chakravartin Māndhātā overcoming the defence of Nāga-loka before conquering the Tāvatimsa-bhavana, the second heaven of the Buddhists. Learning of that deed, the lord of the latter, Sakra immediatly parted with half of his throne to him in No.39 (upper panel), But his pride, indicated here by his gesture, and his evil desire to kill S'akra and occupy the whole throne for himself, led to his downfall and death. The same scene of fall and demise is more artistically shown in No. 134, where his wife is offering water for him, and a man is, eleswhere, pointing to a shooting star, which signifies in Indian mythology the death of a great man. The story of Rāmāyana was also incorporated by the Mahāyāna Buddhists in their mythology and iconograpy. Here in No. 35 we find various events of the Das'aratha-jātaka. Kaikeyī and Mantharā conspiring; Das'aratha telling Rāma about the "boon" he has given to Kaikeyi, by which he has to go to the forest for 12 years. Bharata-kumara bringing the news of the demise of his father Dasaratha, after the 9th year, when Sita and Lakshmana-kumara had gone out to fetch fruits and roots, but Rāma-pandita refusing to go against the original order of his father and offering him *pādukas* to substitute for himself for the remaining three years; and lastly Rāma-pandita (without, of course, conquering

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Rāvana since there was no abduction by him) returning to Ayodhyā to occupy the ancestral throne.

In No. 95, Gods headed by Brahmā requested Bodhissttva to take *birth*, agreeing to which, he is later seen descending down from the fourth heaven Tushita-bhavana, to the earth, in the form of a white elephant, S'vetaketu, through a golden palanquin(kanaka-vimāna) In No, 35, Māyādevī, who gave birth to Gautama, while standing under a S'āla tree, in a garden near Lubinī (Rummin-dei, in Nepalese *tarāi*) is seen holding a branch of that tree. The gods of the four quarters picked up the child on a piece of cloth. on which–the legend. goes–it immediately stood erect and walked seven steps. On the cloth held by these gods in this and similar scenes, we find 7 foot-prints. Over the Pūrna-kumbha, which occassionally as in this panel, is represented in the form of an Ibha-kumbha (head of an elephant), is a Chhatra and a Chāmara, emblems of sovereignty, standing for the Buddha as Dharma-chakravartin. In another panel depicting the *Mahābhinishkramaṇa*, S'akra is holding the Chhatra over prince Siddhārtha, seated on Kanthaka. Not only Chhanna, but Gods also are leading the way, Yakshas are holding up the hoofs of the horse, so that they may not make any noise and awaken the people in the dead of the night, and thus frustrate the mission. In the next scene of Māravijaya, Māra is first seen āttacking the Buddha with his weapons, including a flowery arrow and his daughters, Rati and Prīti, Later defeated, we find him making a bow to Bodhisatva and departing, while Rati wonders how all this could happen ! In No. 43, we find prince Sidhārtha on way to his pleasure garden, when he comes across the third "*Mahā-pūrva-nimitta*" viz. a dead body. He recoils from the pleasures of the world and returns without visiting the garden, In No. 40, the prince hands over his ornaments to Channa;for taking them to his father S'uddhodana and then he is to take to robes, that are kept ready by a monk. In 265/53, Channa, handing over the ornaments to S'udhodana, narrates the whole story of Mahābhinishkramana hearing which the whole harem is grief-stricken. But most afflicted is the lady Yas'odharā (Sidhārtha's wife) who is being supported by her mate; and even the dumb animal Kanthaka is sympathising with her in his own way. In depicting the emotions of the human and animal world, this sculpture alone is sufficient to prove the great mastery and skill of the artists of S'rī-Parvata, as being almost unrivalled in the history of sculpture. Below this scene are two already met with, viz. the carrying away of the Ushnisha by the gods to the Tāvatimsa-bhavana and the handing over of jewelry by prince Siddhāraha to Channa. In No. 54, we find gods, headed by

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Brahma, requesting the Buddha to preach "Dhamma" to the world, and not become Pushchaka Buddha; or perhaps, we have here the Buddha preaching to the Tāvatimsa world. Below is the sceneof Māravijaya, wi[th] Rati holding a mirror while "attacking," and making a gesture of being unable to bear the "insult" while defeated. The Lowest panel depicts "*Sujata-payasa-grahana.*" Sujata, daughter of a chief of Senani-grama, near Uruvelā, had made a vow to the divinity of the Bodhi Tree, that if she got a good husband, she would offer "pāyasa" (milk-preparation to that divinity. Being satisfied with her luck in the marriage, she came to fulfil the vow, but found instead of the divinity Bodhisattva, who had just made up his mind to end his great fast, since he came to believe that fasting led one nowhere. Bodhisattva accepts the offering, after revealing that he is no divinity. No 136 (lower panel)and 96(upper panel) repeat the scene of Māravijaya, but without Rati and Priti, the most effective weapons of Māra. In 96(lower panel) we find the river Nairañjarā making way for the Bodhisattva on the way to the Bodhi Tree and the Nāga-rāja Kāla predicts that within the next week he would obtain *Sambodhi*. He and his wife bowed down, an shown here. In No.34, we find him delivering his First Sermon to the Tāvatimsa world, in the upper panel. In the central one, we can identify the four figures with bowls as those of the four gods, who had come with four golden bowls (or according to other texts with different types of four bowls). But Bodhisattva, not wishing to displease three of them by accepting the bowl of only one of them, accepts all the four bowls. and pressing them together makes one bowl out of them. The outer scene in this panel is not very well identifiable; but it may represent Tapushya and Bhalluka, who gave the first alms to the Buddha. It was at this time that he had no bowl to accept them; and hence the gift by the gods. The lowest panel shows the Buddha arriving at the Bodhi Tree, on one side, and as seated under Muchi linda on the other. The former signifies Saṃbodhi. while the latter the protection after Saṃbodhi. In 135 and 98, (upper panels) we find the scene of *Dharma-chakra-pravartana* or the First Sermon, delivered before the Pañcha.Mahā-vargiyas or the five comrades, Kaundinya and others. The latter had accompanied him during his penance at Uruvelā, but left him when he decided to leave fasting. After Enlightenment, the Buddha found them out at the Deer Park. In 98, we find them, three represented by standing figures with bags, and two by bags only. Here and in the adjoining group, not all are shown probably for want of space. In Nos. 98 (lower) and 92 (upper) we find Ajātasattru of Magadha asking the Buddha a knotty question, which six other philosophers (including Niganṭṭha Ñātaputta or Jina

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Mahāvīra) had failed to answer, and which the Buddha answers metho dically and completely. The question was "What was the good of wearing a monk's robes?" This episode is narrated in *Sāmañña-phala-sutta*. In 38, six Śākya princes, headed by 'Bhaddiya Sakka" are seen approaching the Buddha. Princes, with their monopoly over elephants and horses, are often (as these) represented as seated over them. In another panel we find Bhaddiya undoubtedly followed by others–being shaven and initiated into monkhood, over an elephant. None was ever so shaven; but the artist wishes to represent here a prince. In No. 90. Śakra, wishing to get his term of Śakrahood extended, approaches the Buddha in the Indra-śila-guhā near Rājagriha, and is being introduced by his friend Pañchaśikha, a Gandharva. The latter, mixing the praise of the Buddha with the description of the exploits of Śakra with Apsarases, makes the six Bodhisattvas shut up their ears, in disgust. In No. 31, Vajrapāni, supported by the Buddha, is subduing *Nagaraja Apalala* (a serpent of draught), as Indra, supported by Vishṇu, subdued Vritra (a serpent of draught) in the Vedas, or Indraputra Arjuna, supported by Krishna (a form of Vishṇu), subdued Dhārtarāshtra Kauravya. In 91, Vajrapāṇi subdues the Nāgarāja of the *agniśālā* of Urvela Kāśyapa, for the sake of the Buddha. The latter puts him in a pot. In 44 and 202, *Yaksha Ālavaka*, who was about to devour the last child, the prince, of Ālavaka-grama, and who, learning that his wife was converted into Buddhism, wanted to kill the Buddha, and is seen rushing with a spike, and being prevented by his wife. When waiving her aside, he still fails to kill, the Buddha converts him with a parable, comparing him with a man clinging to a twig, with the Mahānāga of his past below him, the elephant of his future threatening above him, and the rat of present tense gnawing at the root of that twig. No. 58 depicts the *Division of the Ashes* of the Buddha by his Brāhmaṇa disciple Drona. When eight principalities began fighting over the same, to divide them and erect 8 Stūpas over them he suggested the way out. They requested him to make the division. Then the gods and the Nāgas wanted their share. Hence this initial division into 3 parts.

No 290 depicts an outline of a *Sala-bhanjika*, together with a pillar and a cornice. This represents the initial stage of carving, and affords a glimpse into the craft of the sculptor. In No 209 and 210, we have two excellent examples of "*Buddha-padas*" -known to inscriptions as "pādukā-patas"-marked by Pṛrna-kumbha, Tri-ratna, Swastika, Mina-yugala (a pair of fish), and other sacred symbols. Some huge decorated slabs

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provide examples of beams or *transoms*, brought from the Stūpas, Of these Nos. 18 and 236 depict the *subjugation* of Nālāgiri, an elephant set upon the Buddha by his vile cousin Devadatta. Although he trampled many on way, he bows down and takes the dust off his feet. In No. 236 (and also on the Āyākapata of the Stupa slab No. 200), we see Ānanda, who refused to leave the Buddha, when all other monks ran away to save their lives. In No. 233, Chakravarti S'ibi of the *Sibi-jātaka* is cutting the flesh of his thigh, to save the dove of Agni from the hawk of S'akra (Indra). In Nos 203, 70, 17, and 14, we find the whole life of the Buddha from Māyādevi's dream onwards especially the 5 main events, depicted. In No. 17, we have a few scenes viz. the Buddha's visit to the S'ākya temple and Asita's visit to S'uddhodana's palace, not found in others. Another scene in it depicts Sidhdhārtha's last night in the harem, when he finds the ladies gone to sleep, in various postures and gestures, and gets disgusted of all charms of life. No. 19 depicts equally interesting tales of Dipaṇkara Buddha predicting about Sumedha-paṇḍita, a Tāpasa, who covered his muddy path with his back, that he would become Gautama Buddha; of the initiation of Bhadriya S'ākya; of Nanda the hero of *Saundarānanda-kavya*, being finally weaned from the charms of his wife, after seeing the heavenly damsels reward that awaits pious life; and of the Buddha predicting that Jaya, (Brother of Vijaya) who had put earth into the bowl of the Buddha through compassion, would be born as emperor As'oka. In No. 204, Buddha in his former birth of *Nāgarāja-Champeyya*, was captured by a Brāhmaṇa juggler, when on the way to a temple; this evil was dreamt of by his wife, who, then, went to the court of the king of men, to ask for his aid; simultaneously, the juggler brought him there, but the sanke king refused to play any trick; when the king enquired of the reason, the snake-queen said: "How can he play the tricks in the presence of his own wife? He is Nāgarāja Champeyya, my husband. If you set him free, he will assume his own form." So, after being set free he assumed his form; and being Nāgarāja, he is seated on the same throne as Manushya-rāja, since they enjoy the same status.

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